Pam. War

The Meaning of War and The Basis for Permanent Peace

THE MEANING OF WAR
AND
THE BASIS FOR PERMANENT PEACE

BY
JAMES W. JOHNSON

PROPOSITION: *"Come now let us reason together, saith the Lord."*

CONCLUSION: *"The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life."*

1917
Good Government Commission
The New York Federation of Churches
Fifth Avenue Building
New York

WRITER'S PREFACE

The greatest war the world has ever seen must have some deep meaning. Many writers have already drawn various conclusions. To some the evident lesson is national preparedness. To others the failure of preparedness is no less clear. Again others perhaps would find in the commercial relations existing between nations, and the jealousies resulting therefrom, the lesson of absolute free trade and a more generous interpretation of the value of a day's labor. And still again, others will see the clear need of an international police system which would deal with a quarrelsome nation as the guardians of the peace deal with a quarrelsome individual.

But whatever the inference drawn, one fact will be admitted by all, viz.: that if the cause of the war can be found, the first step toward permanent peace has been taken. If the physician understands the cause of the disease, there is reason to believe that his remedy may be effective. But can any cause be found, broad enough and deep enough, to explain such a world crisis? The simple statements following, written at different times in the years 1915-1916, are an attempt to answer this question and to suggest the only method that will lead to an enduring peace.

The solution of the problem can be found in the application of a principle stated many centuries ago; a principle familiar to every student of human nature; a principle proved to be true by every test to which it has been subjected.

J. W. J.

New York, September, 1917.

A BIT OF ANCIENT HISTORY

SEVERAL thousand years ago a certain tribe of people settled in a pleasant and fertile country. The surrounding tribes were not very pleasant neighbors, and not very well disposed toward the newcomers. This was quite to be expected since the newcomers had driven them out, slain many of them, and were now occupying cities and farms to which they had no apparent title other than the old one of might. The surrounding tribes had strange customs, many of them quite pleasant in a way, but not very edifying. In fact, their customs were decidedly bad, as bad as whiskey and beer have been found to be when used too freely. Now the king of the victorious tribe knew very well that his people could not thrive if they adopted these quite delightful but very injurious customs, so he made a strict decree that his people must have nothing to do with such practices.

The word of the king was law, and for a time was obeyed and all went well. But soon the influence of their neighbors began to be seen, and gradually the prohibited customs began to be practiced until they became quite common. The king was very angry and concluded that the people should be treated as we sometimes find it best to treat a very bad and self-willed boy. They received a good, sound thrashing, so severe that in many cases death resulted. The punishment was inflicted by the very tribes who had been ousted from their possessions. The king accomplished this by extending to them for a time his generalship, which was always invincible. The severe lesson had a salutary effect for quite a while. The people became well behaved and were very prosperous.

THE REASON FOR WAR

IS this to be the last War? The question is often asked and it receives many answers. Our peace-loving friends would have us believe that if we would lay aside our army and navy the other nations, admiring our fine example of reliance on the principles of righteousness, would do likewise, and so there could be no future war because there would be nothing to fight with. Furthermore, the doing away with the implements of war would show such a splendid trust in the amity and good will of other nations that a like feeling of peace and good will to all mankind would be aroused in them, and therefore they would, in consequence, be ashamed of their former warlike propensities and would, with glad hearts and loud acclaim, herald the dawn of international good will, the long-looked-for and earnestly-prayed-for realization of the dream of all sincere admirers of the Prince of

Peace. What a beautiful faith in the inherent nobility of mankind shines forth in the belief of our pacifist friends!

Then, again, the men of war—the men of Belial, they might be termed by the pacifists—hold just the opposite view and for just the opposite reason. They say that since war has always existed in the world, due to the quite reasonable ambition to make one's own national ideals paramount, or because of mankind's natural greed and the baser motives common to all, therefore war will always continue, at least for many generations to come, until the ideals of the world have been elevated far above the present standard.

Still others see in war splendid results. They hold that it stimulates, purifies and ennobles by reason of its terrible sufferings, sacrifices and the giving up of all for worthy aims. They would recall the splendid results of our war for independence and our more terrible war for the preservation of the integrity of our nation when the blue and gray forgot their brotherhood in their loyalty to their idealism.

Many other answers can be found to speak the uncertainty of the world as to whether or no this most terrible of all wars our world has seen is to be the last great conflict of the nations.

Perhaps if we should consider some of the reasons given for the present war we might be better able to give a satisfactory answer.

Among the reasons presented are:

1. German imperialism and German ambition, Germany's will to win her place in the sun and Germany's ruthlessness in so doing, as witnessed by the ruin of Belgium. It is said that if Germany should achieve her aims and win the place in the sun she so ardently desires, other nations would soon find themselves eclipsed, and more than that, finally subject to the wonderful energy and tremendous force of the Teuton giant. So that the safety of the world demands an impediment placed in the way of such a contingency. This opinion of the nations seems justified by the facts of the war thus far made evident. And yet I feel sure we have not stated the ultimate reason for the war.

2. Again, many find in England's jealousy and alarm at Germany's marvellous commercial expansion the real reason for the war. For many years now England has been mistress of the sea. Her proud title is justified by the fact that the sun never sets on her wide empire; that the numerous colonies need the protection of the mighty fleet, and more than all that, where English policy is dominant there the races of mankind are benefited by those ideals of justice and thrift which have been approved as sound by the greatest Teacher the world has ever seen, the Galilean.

It is claimed that Germany's ideals are in direct conflict with those of England and that the world approves our English cousins in taking up the gage thrown down by Germany when she trampled into dust and blood her Belgian neighbors, thereby clearly outraging that sense of justice and mercy common to mankind. So that here, indeed, is found a reason adequate for the war. However this may be, I will beg to differ from this most reasonable conclusion and state most

emphatically that we have not yet found the reason for the war.

3. Another theory is the deep-seated revenge of France. About forty years ago the heart of France was sorely wounded by the loss of her two beautiful daughters, Alsace and Lorraine. Germany was the brutal ravisher. Like a tiger stung to madness by the cruel loss, France has waited for the opportunity to spring at the throat of her neighbor; and now at last the time has come and all her children are heart and soul fired with a spirit of revenge that will be satisfied by nothing less than German life and blood and the recovery of beautiful Alsace and Lorraine. Single-handed, France could never have succeeded, but now that her powerful friends, England and Russia, are found willing to join hands with her in curbing once and for all the dangerous tendencies of German ruthlessness, she believes her hope may be attained. Once again it may be frankly replied we have not yet found the reason for the war.

4. It is a long way from the sunny fields of France to the cold and frozen

heart of Russia. But the stream of madness flows very swiftly in these days of war, and the torpid, sluggish, frozen Russian has become aroused at last, the summons to war has met a quick and ready response, the growl of the bear is heard, his claws and cruel mouth are stained with the blood of his Western neighbors and his dull heart is fired with what he thinks a noble ambition, to sweep away at last the barriers which for so many centuries have, like a wall of adamant, withstood his progress to the sea. At last an open port is in sight, and that port Constantinople. A door of wider opportunity is opening and soon Russia hopes that her immense grain fields will prove a veritable stream of gold in providing food for many millions beyond her borders. Surely none can find fault with so noble an enterprise, none can question the right of Russia to improve and develop her people, and incidentally to increase her wealth. Is she not justified in entering the tremendous conflict and making the most of that opportunity now presented by joining the allies and winning her way not to the sun

but to the sea? Single-handed, she, too, could not hope to achieve her aim for many years to come, because time, much time, is needed yet to develop her resources and teach her millions those lessons of obedience, sacrifice and manhood absolutely essential in contending successfully with such an antagonist as Germany.

Have we not at last the answer or rather is not the answer to be found by the combining of all the facts stated regarding Germany, England, France and Russia? Is not the war due to the jealousies, fears and false ambitions of all these nations of Europe? Once again we must say no; but we will admit that all of these are secondary or contributory causes.

Let us try once again. Italy, the land of poetry and song, the land of art and sculpture, the home of the beautiful, the aesthetic, the delicate; Italy, whose wonderful climate and more wonderful people draw to themselves all the admirers of the elevated, the pure, the charming; Italy, even Italy has at last drawn the

sword and become partner in this feast of rage, passion, blood and devilishness. Moreover, her enemies say that Italy is a traitor, a turncoat, a coward, waiting until her allies, Germany and Austria, are surrounded by the foe and weakened by many a hard-fought battle, then leaving them in the lurch and joining hands with the Allies because she believes the Allies will win and that she will be a sharer in the spoils of war. My opinion is that such statements are unjust to Italy. Rather do I believe that Italy, finding herself allied with nations who believe that scraps of paper may be destroyed at will, that solemn treaties may be abrogated if national ambitions run counter to them, has decided to leave such partners, finding their methods incompatible with her sense of reason and right, and has chosen wisely the best time for doing so. What folly for her in the beginning of the war to have taken such a step as she now has taken! All the world was amazed, stunned, at such action on the part of Germany. The confusion of ideas arising from such a piece of folly, the uncertainty as to her best future policy

quite natural under the conditions, and the unquestioned ruin she would bring upon herself if in revenge at her disloyalty the armies of Austria "came down like a wolf on the fold, their cohorts all gleaming in purple and gold"; all these seem to me good and sufficient reasons for Italy doing as she has done. If I find that my partners are rascals, shall I forfeit my self-respect by continuing my partnership with them?

Have we not at last found the reason, the true reason, for the war in Italy's decision; a decision in harmony with the sentiments of the world condemning the ruthlessness and barbarity of Germany and Austria? And once more shall we say, most emphatically, no!

Let us not puzzle ourselves any further, but say that the true reason for this war and all the wars the world has ever seen is found in the eating of an apple. Ages and ages ago, when the soul of man was born, there began a conflict in that soul entailing all the sorrow, all the tears, all the bloodshed and all the sin of man. It will be recalled that the scene was a

beautiful garden filled with luscious fruits and fragrant flowers. The Owner of the garden, a man, a woman, and a serpent were the actors in a tragedy. The serpent beguiled the woman and tempted her to eat an apple; she induced her husband to partake. The Owner of the garden was very angry at the man and the woman because He had told them not to eat the fruit of that particular tree. In His anger He drove them out of the garden because of their disobedience. The descendants of the man and woman inherited their tendency to disobey, and so sin came into the world. All will admit that if there was no sin in the world there would be no sorrow; no tears, no crime, no war, for all would live at peace and every one would think as carefully of his neighbor's rights and happiness as of his own.

Now, war is like an epileptic fit. When the fit comes on the patient falls to the ground, wallowing and foaming; he is bereft of reason and is altogether a most disgusting and fearful object. The fit passes, reason returns and the patient be-

comes quite normal again. But the disease is still there and only time is needed for the recurrence of the terrible symptoms, declaring most positively there is no hope of release for the tortured sufferer until the cause of the disease is removed. All the wars of the world are but the recurring fits of madness and insanity which will surely continue to afflict mankind until the disease of sin is removed. Is there no hope? There still stands, glorious and beautiful, that tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. The leaves are a sure panacea, a never-failing cure for the terrible curse. All the world knows of the cure, ten thousand times ten thousand souls will swear to its wondrous power in their own lives and the glorious peace and calm content that follows like a benediction falling on the troubled hearts of those who take the Master at His word, who heed His call: "Come unto me and rest, take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Again, war is the rod in the hand of Almighty God, laid on the backs of dis-

obedient children who continually flout Him, break His laws and follow their own wills. Some day the world will wake up to the fact that it is folly to arouse His anger and to invite the lightning of His wrath by such asininity, when it is very much more comfortable and pleasant to live in harmony with Him and to enjoy the favor of His approval. He showers His richest blessings on those who seek Him and who try to order their lives in accordance with His commands.

It needs but brief consideration to show clearly the relationship between sin and war. It was admitted that the ambitions of Germany, the greed, the jealousy and fears of England, the revenge of France and the aims of Russia have had much to do with the war; undoubtedly they are secondary and contributory causes. It only remains to show how these secondary causes are due to sin. Are not these secondary causes plainly the result of forgetting or of breaking the law of God where He says: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

How is love for one's neighbor to be reconciled with an ambition so cruel and ruthless that the ruin of a nation of seven millions is but an incident? How is love for one's neighbor to be reconciled with the ideals of an empire willing to reduce a nation of over three hundred millions to the depths of vice and crime by forcing upon them use of opium, with all its horrors for the love of money? How is love for one's neighbor to be reconciled with the fierce and fearful spirit of revenge that for forty years has been one of the guiding impulses of a mighty nation? "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," saith the Lord, has been entirely overlooked, forgotten or disregarded. How is love for one's neighbor to be reconciled with that absolute disregard of one's own people, that terrible, cold, calculating, indomitable grinding down and blotting out of all the hopes, longings and aims inherent in the human soul, even in the cruelty of Russia?

Is any further evidence needed to show the intimate relationship between sin and these secondary or contributory causes

of the war? If breaking the law of God is sin, surely the nations of the world have sinned most grievously. And yet this is only a part of the black record. What shall we say of drunkenness, vice, murder, indifference to the suffering of toiling, dying men and women around us? What shall we say of that lack of appreciation of the mercy and love of an infinite God so clearly proven by the worldly, selfish, pleasure-loving multitudes, both in and out of the church, which merits the comment, "Without God and without hope in the world"? Surely the lightnings of His fury and the thunderbolts of His wrath are more than justified. And should our fair land, too, be wrapped in the consuming flame of His punishments, would we not bow our heads most humbly and say, with contrite heart: In all Thy dealings with Thy children Thou art just?

THE BASIS FOR PERMANENT PEACE

THE nations of the world are slowly learning that the teachings of the Galilean are sound. In the truth of this statement rests whatever of hope we may entertain for a permanent and satisfactory peace when the present war is over. Before the terms of peace can be wisely discussed the true nature of war and the reason for war must be acknowledged. If you read Bernhardi or Prof. Crambe you may conclude with them that war is really a blessing to a people, developing their courage, self-sacrifice, etc. I am willing indeed to agree with them that war is a blessing, but for a very different reason from the one they recognize.

A loving father has a wilful, disobedient son. After all other measures of correction fail, the father, as a last resort, applies the rod. A good, sound thrashing will do more for that boy than hours of counsel and tender advice. The result proves the wisdom of the father and the lad grows into a worthy man. War is

nothing more than the punishment of God upon wilful, disobedient people who will never obey until they are compelled through suffering to turn from their selfishness and follies to the soul's last resort, God. The punishment may entail rivers of blood and oceans of tears, but the means are justified by the end, at least in this case. Furthermore, no other means have ever been found adequate.

Illustrations without number can be given of the truth of this statement. The one best known is found in the history of Israel. But close analysis will show that the same statement is true of other wars.

The problem before the nations is to learn what God intends by this most terrible war in the world's history. And now we have arrived at the point where we began, viz., that the teachings of the Galilean are sound. God sent His Son to teach men how to live. "I am come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly." And what does He tell us about living? That the underlying principle governing all our relations with each other is embodied in that one immortal saying: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Many experiments have been made to test the wisdom of this command. Have they

been successful and does the rule really apply to every-day affairs? How about humanitarianism so much talked of at present and which is one of the strong, leading tendencies of the present generation? Certainly humanitarianism is the direct application of the rule. Does humanitarianism work, is it sensible or visionary, is it a sound policy, does it tend to peace, or is its influence for discord, does it make the world any better? To ask the question is to answer it. Every other test of the command has resulted in like manner. In short, God knows what is best for man, and Christ made no mistakes when He stated God's laws for man.

Objection will be made that war is often the result of ambition, revenge, greed, etc., etc. These indeed are secondary causes, but what more do they all amount to than failure to consider the rights of other nations as equal to our own rights? Again, objection will be made that if war is a punishment from God then the punishment is a failure, for war has existed from the earliest times, and therefore God's chastisements are unavailing and mankind will continue to the end of time much as it is now. Partly true and partly false, and like most compounds of truth and error utterly misleading. One generation quickly forgets

the experiences, the tragedies, the sentiments of an earlier generation. One of the puzzles of life is that we almost never will learn from others' experience. The teaching of history is clear about the luxury, the weakening of moral sentiment, the final decline of the splendid Roman Empire, but many nations since then have gone or are going the same way. No, there is nothing in history that will controvert the assumption that war is God's way of bringing nations and races to a proper understanding of the fact that this is His world, and if kings, princes, rulers and peoples will not live in it in accordance with His laws but insist upon infringing those laws, by the very nature of the case retribution must follow. The more severe the punishment the shorter it may be. The horror of the present war has never been equalled. But the sins of the nations have never been so great because in the light of God's revelation of His will and His law made so plain by the Christ that a man can read His meaning even while he runs and the meaning may be clear even to a half-wit; in the bright light of this revelation, I say, brighter and brighter as the years roll by, what do we find to be the conditions prevailing throughout the nations? Drunkenness everywhere; vice, commercialized or otherwise, rampant in city,

town, village, even in the home; lust of gold and lust of power consuming the hearts and filling the minds of multitudes; trifling with justice in the name of the law; supreme indifference to the agony and suffering of the poor; envy, jealousy, hatred, common as the air we breathe. This is but the beginning of the list of crimes and follies of the present day: a condition which has long existed and which has caused an agony so great that the cry has long been ascending to the very gates of heaven, "How long, O Lord, how long?" The answer to that cry is being seen in the present war.

The query often arises—Is this the last great war? There is no reason for thinking so unless mankind has reached that stage of development, of evolution if you like, where common sense at last prevails over stupid perversity. If that wonderful day is dawning when at last the Ruler of the universe is recognized as a God that punishes as well as a Father that loves and saves, then there is hope of permanent peace, and not till then.

It may be suggested that according to this theory America is spotless, since she has not yet at least been drawn into the vortex of this whirlwind of madness; and we know that such is far from being the truth. No, our fair land is smirched

and soiled with the same vileness and criminal folly. But America is still a young nation; God is still patient with her; there is ample time for her to fill to the brim her cup of iniquity and to so weary the patience of the Almighty that at last she, too, will feel the lightning and the fury of His wrath. At times we can almost hear the warning, and can almost see the flash of the distant storm.

Listen: Not long ago very early one morning, before the darkness had left the sky, before the birds began to sing, I heard a rumble of distant thunder. In the stillness of the night it sounded ominous, startling, and suddenly I seemed to see a vision of the future, the ultimate America, caught at last in the consequence of her sin and groaning under the agony of punishment Divine.

> In the dawning of the morning,
> Came the thunder of the Lord,
> The day of wrath was breaking
> In accordance with His word.
> —Malachi 4:1.

I do verily believe that unless there is some radical change in our treatment of these grave issues that there is no escape from the wrath of an outraged God.

Regarding the terms of peace for the present war: Is it possible to discuss the

terms on an entirely new basis, in a manner different from any hitherto employed, a basis consonant with our original proposition, love to our neighbor? Let us see how such a policy would work out if applied to the nations of Europe. Let us suppose that some years ago Great Britain decided on a certain policy affecting her trade relationship with Germany, France and Russia. The policy became law and was executed because it was advantageous to Britain. Its effect on Germany, France and Russia would undoubtedly be injurious, but that fact would be of secondary importance, and in truth might even be considered an advantage as a retaliation for some previous injury to England resulting from a policy adopted by either Germany, France or Russia at some former time. Now what do we find? When England adopts this policy beneficial to herself alone and injurious to her neighbors, exciting their just resentment, right then and there has been sown one of the seeds of a future war. A wiser and more statesmanlike method of procedure would be for England to frankly present to Germany, France and Russia a brief of her new policy and inquire of them if such policy would be mutually satisfactory. If either Germany, France or Russia should reply that such a policy would, in their opinion, prove in-

jurious, a council of the nations involved could be called and after due deliberation a policy could be framed which would be of benefit to all. Now what have we found? Such action on the part of England would compel the respect of Germany, France and Russia, would win their affection. In time of distress because of famine, pestilence, or any other affliction, Germany, France and Russia would hurry to the assistance of England, seeing in her a big brother in distress. One of the seeds of permanent peace would have been sown. There is no need to extend the argument. Its appeal will meet every reasonable mind. But will the minds of those whose high duty is to arrange the terms of this peace be reasonable? There is the danger and there is the uncertainty.

As some one has already suggested there would no longer be need of army or navy, except a police force on land and sea adequate to quell any disturbance that might arise because of some member of the new family of nations forgetting the rule under which all were living. This police force could be easily sustained by a tax on all the nations, levied in proportion to the wealth of each. What a trifle this would be compared to the crushing burdens under which Europe is staggering today!

The benefits that would accrue to all from a peace settled on the terms of brotherly love are almost without number and volumes might be written on the subject. The imagination loves to dwell on the conditions which will prevail among men when at last the Prince of Peace has come to dwell and to rule in our hearts, our homes, our cities, and the nations of the world. Will such an ideal state always be an ideal? Can it never crystalize into reality? Assuredly there is hope. Read the signs of the times; Russia declaring positively against intemperance; England trying to be as progressive as Russia; France learning again to pray, if we may believe reports of the press. These are signs of deep import, they indicate that these nations are at least turning toward The Light. Who shall say that they will not one day fairly face the rising sun and behold the glorious day arise when the Son of Righteousness shall shine above a world undimmed by the fogs, the mists, the dark clouds of selfishness, perversity and folly?

You and I, dear reader, may never see this glorious day. The peace soon we hope to be adjusted may be patched up on the terms of man's wisdom; terms involving more or less of further punishment and disgrace to the conquered nation or nations, as the case may be; terms

that will leave a sting as dangerous as the sting of a serpent's tooth, with its poison working its deadly way throughout the nation; terms, perchance, that may seem plausible on the surface but which conceal craftily the greed and avarice underlying; terms which are absolutely in essence devoid of that brotherly love which must be the basis of any permanent peace. A peace so arranged may last for a term of years, longer or shorter is not of much consequence. When that period is ended we will have another feast of passion, blood, lust, revenge, devilishness, quite worthy of such asininity. But doubt not that the day will finally come when the long, long, weary lesson ended at last, the statesmen of the nations, men who fear God and who love His Son, will assemble in solemn conclave, remembering Him who said, "Come, now, let us reason together." Guided at last by that Light which never yet has misled the sons of men, those statesmen will arrange a peace that will last as long as the Rock of Ages on which it will be founded.

THE WRATH OF MAN AND THE LOVE OF GOD

A WORLD catastrophe so great as the present war must of necessity produce results unexpected. We read with tranquil mind perhaps of the great wars of the past. In the light of the events preceding and following those wars, they seem not so strange or unusual. In fact, reasoning from cause to effect we may almost say such changings and overturnings were unavoidable. But when we live in the midst of such a time of terror and distress, when the brutal instincts of man unrestrained by law or convention burst forth in all their true and horrid nakedness, when honor which even thieves are supposed to respect, is found to be an unknown quantity, then questions begin to arise, and many begin to doubt even those eternal verities upon which they thought were founded their faith in God and man. It is one thing to read of a fight to the death; it is quite another thing to be a participant in such a struggle.

All who sympathize with the weakness

of human nature feel the need of exercising not a little charity for those who once proclaimed a glowing faith in God's goodness and love, and who now find that their faith wavers, that the sunlight of their hope is dimmed, that cruel doubt of the very existence of a God who is good constantly recurs, and whose lapse into pessimism is a serious stumbling block to others.

All attempts to understand the mystery of suffering will end much like the attempt to understand the mystery of original sin; the mystery will remain a mystery still. But suffering like sin must be accepted as an undeniable fact just as the phenomena of nature must be accepted as undeniable facts, although they are but partially understood. Even if we may not fully comprehend the mystery of suffering, there are many truths related to it that no one denies and which may be found in their acceptance to have some bearing on the almost staggering problem of the war.

Since the time when man first broke the law of God suffering has been as common in the experience of men as the air we breathe. Even the holy Son of God endured calmly, bravely, patiently, sufferings beyond the experience of any of the sons of men. Now we do not find

doubt arise because sin and sorrow and suffering have been and are so universal. We accept this fact as something dreadful, indeed, and to a great extent unnecessary in view of Christ's cleansing blood, but we do not doubt the goodness of God or His wondrous love to man because these things are true. Rather is our faith in Him strengthened and our love for Him deepened since, notwithstanding our sins and consequent suffering, His love prevails over all and peace comes to us through acceptance of His marvelous gift.

Now why should our faith stumble when the sorrow, suffering and agony are multiplied even to the terrible proportions due to this war? No new principle has entered into the problem. The factors are the same. If two times two equals four, is there any new truth stated when we say four times four equals sixteen? If sin drove Adam from Eden, and if sin caused the death on Calvary, should we wonder that sin represented by twenty centuries of the outrageous neglect of Christ's law to love one another should result in such a war? No new factor has entered into the problem. Reasoning from cause to effect, some such cataclysm seems to have been inevitable. Surely the consequence of sin cannot be questioned. The history of mankind leaves

no loop-hole of escape from the conclusion: "The wages of sin is death."

No one of honest mind, examining thoroughly into the affairs and relationships of men, can possibly doubt that the law of love and charity has been most grossly violated persistently and consciously since that law was first enunciated. But this is only the beginning of the list of failures on man's part to live in harmony with God's commands. In fact, our whole civilization is permeated from top to bottom with the rottenness of sin and selfishness. Such a broad and sweeping statement does not in the least controvert the equally true statement that there are many true, sincere, loyal followers of Christ whose light is shining steadily and brightly, and whose lives make all the more clear by force of contrast the surrounding darkness. Because sin is so terrible a thing and its consequences so horrible is no reason for doubting the goodness of God or His love to man. For on the other hand, the consequences of obeying His laws and living in harmony with His will do unquestionably bring peace and joy, and all the satisfactions of a life well spent. Unless we admit this corresponding truth we merely give proof that we are narrow-minded and disposed to consider but one side of the problem. An honest,

fair-minded and dispassionate study of the whole matter will compel us to admit that there is no true reason for doubting our God or His love to man. Let us rather be fair-minded enough to put the blame where it truly belongs—upon ourselves.

In looking back over many of the tragic events of history we have brought home to us the truth so well stated centuries ago: "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee; the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain." One or two examples will suffice. The terrible outbreak of man's cruelty and stupidity shown in the horrors of the inquisition caused the faith of many to waver, and not a few to deny their Lord. But can any one now question that, by the wisdom of Almighty God, this fearful storm of man's wrath was made the very instrument whereby the flame which was intended to consume and destroy those who believed in worshipping their God according to their conscience, was converted into the very means whereby religious liberty eventually became dominant? Persecution drove our forefathers across the seas; but the landing at Plymouth Rock was symbolic of that rock foundation of freedom to think and believe as we choose, on which was to be founded the future growth and stability

of our country. The awful slaughter of our Civil War preceded the firmer establishment of the Union and the freedom of the slave. The same principle is found prevailing in the long, slow, and sometimes disheartening advance of civilization from lower to higher planes.

Why then should we doubt that after this unspeakably fearful time of suffering the same advance will be true? Many of us may not live long enough to see the wonderful way in which God will use this tempest of man's wrath for His greater praise and glory, but we may on this rest assured, that whatsoever of the storm would not work out for His greater praise and the eventual benefit of mankind, will be restrained.

Never yet have His promises failed; never yet has there been a reversal of that law of advance just noted; never yet, in all the darkest scenes of tragedy and gloom, has the light of faith failed and gone out in the hearts of all of His true believers; and never yet has that faith failed of justification in the light of future events.

"Though He slay me yet shall I trust Him," was uttered centuries ago before our Christ had given the final and most complete proof of love divine. Remembering that wondrous life of sacrifice,

suffering, sorrow and death for you and me, cannot our faith remain firm and true, even under the agony and distress of the present war, when we recall that the love of God was the reason for the Star of Bethlehem and the sacrifice on Calvary? To be sure we cannot understand such a love as this, but at least we may be true to it, glory in it, and never question it.

THE SIGNS OF PROMISE

IS there yet the dawning of the morning? Is the night of rage and bloodshed passing? Can we see signs of returning sanity; any return to reason? "Watchman, tell us of the night, what the signs of promise are." The world is waiting for an answer. The groaning of the prisoners, the suffering of the wounded, the agony of the starving and oppressed, the tears of little children, the dumb despair of crushed nations—these terrible witnesses of the triumph of force and cruelty are all crying aloud for the same answer. Is there any answer, and is it one of hope? Is there any room for the philosophy of the optimist in a world darkened by such a tempest of rage and brutality? No one believes the war can last forever: but is there any reason to think that this war will not be followed by another just as fearful? He would be presumptuous indeed who claimed the wisdom to give a definite answer. But there are certain principles involved in the problem which may throw at least a sidelight on its solution.

Nothing in the past is comparable to the present world conflict. We will have to go far back indeed to find anything that even resembles a precedent. The nearest to it is the flood. Just as the gracious showers cleanse the air in summer time and refresh drooping nature, so the mighty waters in Noah's day swept away the accumulated filth and abominations of centuries. A world was involved in the cleaning because a world was involved in the filth. But fire will cleanse as thoroughly as water. The bow of promise was never extended to cover devouring flames. If a flood was needed to cleanse a filthy world, why is not a cleansing fire to be expected if the world becomes filthy again and refuses any milder form of purifying? I have heard the statement that just previous to the war civilization was at its highest stage; mankind had evolved—developed, if you like—to a point never before attained; education was more general than had been known; even the spirit of charity was evident in all lands, among all races; in fact, the world was going very well and the dawn of a better day was clearly visible. Therefore, such a climax of horror and suffering, such a tempest of the brutal instincts of primitive man, seems to be a reversal, a turning backward, a retrogression, a negative answer

to man's well-founded hope of a better and a brighter day.

Such a statement and such an inference are absolutely misleading. If I am following an uncertain path in the darkness of the night, I may stumble and fall. If I am walking over the same path at noon day, stumbling and falling are inexcusable. The accumulated light of centuries was shining on man's pathway on August 1st, 1914. And yet the events immediately following are comparable to those of the Stone Age. Such stupid blundering is almost past believing. If a few years ago a prophet had declared what the world would see during 1914, 1915 and 1916, he would have been judged by the majority of mankind fit for the asylum.

And yet the student of the past reasoning from cause to effect might have found in the prophet's words only a repetition of a story so old and oft repeated that the wonder would be that the world had not learned the simple lesson long ago. Let me illustrate: In a little pamphlet issued some months ago I made the following statement: "War is the rod in the hand of Almighty God, laid on the backs of disobedient children who continually flout Him, break His laws and follow their own wills." This truth is not gen-

erally accepted. An English critic takes exception to it as follows: "The whole cataclysm is far more visibly the work of man than of any Higher Power." The criticism is partly true and deserving of a reply. Suppose a father truly loves his boy and is deeply grieved at his persistent wrong-doing. What shall the father do? His action will depend upon the character and intensity of his love for the boy. A true father will apply the rod, although the punishment may cause him more pain than the son suffers. A third party might say that the punishment has nothing to do with the father and was caused solely by the boy's viciousness. Yet if there had been no father there would have been no punishment.

To say that this war and all wars are a punishment from the Almighty is absolutely true; it is equally true that this war and all wars are the result of man's folly, stupidity and sin. The two statements are not contradictory; the one is the supplement of the other. The simple and true explanation of the present war is found in the fact that notwithstanding the accumulated light and knowledge of all ages regarding the inevitable result of the infraction of Divine law, mankind still persisted in the breaking of that law in numberless ways. Even the laws of men, which are but the reflection of Di-

vine law, must be observed. If broken, there must be a penalty, otherwise our civilization would soon cease to exist. So simple a truth needs no explanation. Can the law of God then be lightly set aside? If the punishments of men are to be feared when their laws are broken, what shall be said of the folly of those who dare to outrage the God of heaven and earth and to violate His most solemn commands? But little thought is necessary to show the connection. During the past hundred years (any other period would do as well), what has been the underlying principle governing the diplomacy of the nations? It is the same old story, monotonous in its repetition. If the other nation is weak, get the better of it, by fair means or foul. If the other nation is ignorant or backward, exploit it. But whatever you do with the other nation make it subserve your own selfish interests. Some statesmen have gone so far as to teach that if a nation is small or weak, that is of itself sufficient reason for a stronger nation to crush it. Surely a beautiful theory and one to make the King of Hell rejoice. The same crass ignorance, nauseating in its stupidity, has prevailed in the relationships of individuals as well as nations. Selfishness, greed, brutal passion, lying, fraud, violence, murder; are they not so common

that our daily papers are filled with the disgusting record? Not for a moment should we overlook or minimize the honesty, the courage, the truth, the generosity and nobility of unnumbered loyal souls giving of their best, yes, their very lives to lighten the burdens and ease the sorrows of others. But do these glorious ones represent the majority of mankind? A truthful answer compels us to admit that they are the exception to a rule briefly summarized by the words selfishness and sin.

What escape can there be from the inevitable conclusion? Sooner or later retribution must follow; the only uncertainty is the length of time. There can be no evasion of the law; moral law and Divine law are as remorseless in their action as physical law. If I thrust my hand into the fire can I hope to escape the pain? I may curse the fire for its cruelty and thereby proclaim myself a fool. So men of little intelligence or brutal stupidity may curse the Almighty for these unparalleled sufferings and thereby prove their folly. The greatest poet that England ever saw once wrote: "What fools these mortals be!" But he did not go to the root of the matter and explain the reason why men are fools. A greater man than he gave the reason in words that aptly fit the present times: "The

fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." Very few can be found today to say there is no God; but "your actions speak so loud I cannot hear what you say" conveys a truth no one denies.

The deeds of the majority of mankind today are a plain declaration of absolute loyalty to Satan, and trust in his promises. Am I overstating the truth when I say that in their dealings with each other the nations are governed by the same principle, that of absolute selfishness and disregard of the highest interests and rights of the other nations? Here again there are fine exceptions that everyone can recall, but are they not the exceptions rather than the rule? Now if the Creator of mankind was indifferent to the future of the race, or if in sadness at such persistent folly He concluded to leave them to their fate, if He had not by numberless proofs made plain that He would terribly punish but would never totally annihilate, we might conclude that this war would continue and would develop until the filth and abomination of the world were as thoroughly cleaned by the enveloping flame as when the waters so long ago did the will of the Almighty.

Some thousands of years ago it took seventy years of cruel captivity to teach

a race the folly and sin of idol worship; but this severe punishment did not come until after repeated punishments of shorter duration. Was the lesson learned? Never again in the history of that race do we hear of idol worship. Shall we say then that this war will continue until the nations shall put away their sins, truly repent and live in decency and righteousness? By no means. He who would pretend to know the mind of God and who claimed to fathom His purposes, to declare the times and the seasons, would be devoid of common sense as well as reverence. But this truth may be stated without hesitation: either this war will continue until men confess their sins and cry in agony for repentance or it will be followed in due time by another visitation of Divine wrath in the form of war, or pestilence, or famine, or some other form of punishment. This is inevitable, for it is the mere statement of a law that has never failed. Can you recall any nation of prominence whose fall was not preceded by moral degeneration? Is it not passing strange that the nations cannot learn the simple lesson written in letters of fire through all the ages? And yet it is no more strange than our failure to grasp the same truth taught so plainly in our individual lives. The old, old truth of folly, selfishness and sin, en-

tailing inevitable retribution; the broken law and the consequent punishment.

It is with a sigh of relief that we turn the page so dark and sad with its grim record and for a moment consider the brighter side. If selfishness and sin involve punishment, it is no less true that punishment contains the promise of knowledge, and knowledge is the opening door to wisdom. If "the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God," it is just as true that "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." Not fear in the ordinary meaning of the word fright, but rather reverence, respect to, appreciation of.

It is an undeniable fact that today many are asking for the deeper meaning of this unparalleled season of punishment and suffering; and it is also equally true that many are indicating by what they write in the press that this deeper meaning is being gradually comprehended. It is also true that some at least of the nations at war are showing signs of returning sanity. Russia advocating temperance, France turning from frivolity to prayer, England endeavoring at least to point the way to sobriety; these are hopeful signs. Even the rulers of these nations may see in such movements nothing but the struggles of those nations to

meet the exigencies of war, and yet will one be accused of too fanciful an imagination if he infers that the Ruler of all nations is again doing what He has so often done in the past, bringing home to the consciousness of men that this world is His creation and that it shall be governed by His law. This war may end with but the beginning of the lesson learned, or with its ending may come the clearest revelation the world has seen of the truth just stated; therefore all predictions as to its duration may be taken at their face value. The one fact to be held clearly in mind is that now, as ever in the past, even "the wrath of man shall praise Him; the remainder of wrath shall He restrain." In other words, all along through the history of the ages His plans have been unfolding and His will has been accomplished. It takes no supreme effort of faith to accept the fact that if He undertook the regeneration of the world as Calvary is witness to, He will complete the gracious design. The expulsion from Eden is not so momentous a fact as the sacrifice on Golgotha. The despair of mankind may well give way and change to assured hope if we will but listen to the angels' song at Bethlehem.

A PRAYER FOR THE NATIONS

ALMIGHTY GOD, Maker of Heaven and Earth, Ruler of the Universe, Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and End of All, we humbly come before thine August Presence, we bow in the dust at Thy feet, we confess our great and many sins, we beseech for Thy mercy and Thy pardon. Teach us, Great God, the meaning of the tumult of the nations. Why are the lightnings of Thy wrath poured out? Why doth Thy fierce anger burn, why are the people consumed, why the agony, the bloodshed, the misery, the horrible whirlwind of passion, revenge, hatred, raging in the souls of men?

Great God, speak clearly, we beseech Thee, let Thy people know the meaning of this Thy day of vengeance. Surely Thou hast been merciful in the past, surely Thou hast led Thy children in a plain path by the hands of Thy servants, surely the teaching of Thy Holy Son is plain. Through Him Thou hast taught us to love Thee with our heart, our soul and our strength, because Thou hast first

loved us and hast sent Him as the token of Thy love. Through Him Thou hast taught us to love our brother as ourselves.

Great God, how have we learned the lesson! With deep humility we confess our sin. In place of love we hate. We have broken Thy law; we have followed our own will, not Thine; we have forgotten our brother's needs; we have let sin triumph over us and reign within our souls; we have defiled Thy temple; we have desecrated Thy holy place; we have altogether turned aside from Thee; we have proved ourselves unworthy of Thy love. And now, too late, in this the day of Thine anger we remember, alas! that Thou art the same unchangeable, unchanging God, Thou art Jehovah of Hosts, as well as Heavenly Father, Thou dost hate sin, Thou dost punish terribly those who will not repent, Thou dost annihilate those who will not heed Thy warnings.

And now, Great God, we beseech Thee that by the power of Thy grace, by the love of Thy Son, open the eyes of the people. Let them see Thee in Thine anger, let them hear the thunder of Thy Voice, let them feel the lightning of Thy wrath until all men shall say, verily, there is a God in heaven; verily, His Will

shall be done on earth; verily, there is no hope for mankind except in obedience to Thee. We beseech of Thee, Great God, not to stem the torrent of Thine anger, but that quickly the world may learn the awful lesson of its folly and may turn to the living God; whom to know is light and joy and peace, now and evermore.—Amen and Amen.

POSTSCRIPT

The story of Eden describes today. One apple preferred to the favor of the Almighty Father, things ranked above the Author of all things; wrong relations between men designed to live like brothers, competitor Cain killing envied Abel; wrong relations to God, dull wits trying to hide from the Lord of the Garden behind the flowerings of the Garden of the Lord—it is all 1914 A.D., not 4,004 B.C. or 40,004 B.C. Sin, the missing of the mark of living, is, as Mr. Johnson so well puts it, the root cause of the war.

All things are yet to be sacramental symbols. The conservation of bread-stuffs is a call to reverence for the Divine life and love resident and reproductive in every "corn of wheat."

"Christ made no mistakes when He stated God's laws for man." "The Ruler of the Universe is a God that punishes as well as a Father that loves and saves."

The development of these two great truths by a Christian layman in these pages give them a compelling interest for pulpit and pew.

WALTER LAIDLAW.

September 14, 1917.